

Marketing – Press Releases

The most important consideration is the timing! For example, these should be submitted to magazines at least a month in advance. Find out the publication date and deadlines for your local paper. Newspapers fill up from the back, with the most important stories and breaking news at the front so the more time you give them, the more chance that your story will be included in a prominent position. On weekly papers, reporters may have more time to go out and about writing features on publication day than at other times of the week. Another useful tip is to 'save' your press release until a time when there is likely to be less competition from other stories – the newspaper 'silly season', the Christmas holidays or just before a bank holiday.

Emailing a press release allows you to access a wide range of media outlets quickly and cheaply but beware – these are less likely to be read if it's obvious that they have been mailed out at random rather than targeted at particular publications/programmes.

Press releases should be submitted on letterheads and clearly marked as such. The title should provide a summary in not more than eight words (try to make this snappy!) and the **date should be clearly marked** below this on the right-hand side.

Remember that you may have only 20 seconds to interest a busy news editor so try to sum up the subject or provide a teaser in the first sentence. The first paragraphs should outline the activity answering the following questions – who? what? why? where? when? and how? You should also include a quote in one of the opening paragraphs.

Leave **double-line spacing between the paragraphs** to make the release easy to read and keep it short and sweet, with adequate margins. **Aim for one page of A4** and certainly no more than two.

Write in the active tense rather than the passive tense (eg 'the cat sat on the mat' rather than 'the mat was sat on by the cat'). This sounds much more punchy and exciting. Use plain English – don't use long words when short words will do and avoid jargon at all costs. Your press release should be easily understood by someone with no specialist knowledge.

If you want coverage of an event, follow up with the following text in bold type:

You are invited to send a writer and/or photographer to [organisation] at [place] at [time] on [date].

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Always finish with the following:

For further information, please contact [yourself] on [phone and ideally mobile number].

Make sure that you are available when the media are likely to be chasing you!

If you find it difficult to fit an explanation of what you or your organisation does into the main text of the press release, **write a summary paragraph in bold text at the end marked 'Notes to editors'**. If your organisation has produced a brochure, you may also wish to include this.

Newspapers are messy places and bits of paper easily get lost so finish your press release with the word '...ends' in the bottom right-hand corner and if it is more than one page long, mark '...cont' at the end of the first page. If you send your own photographs, add 'pics enclosed' at the end. If you have a limited number of photos, substitute 'pictures available on request'.

Don't be disappointed if your press release is not used. Many end up in the bin, and that includes those sent by public relations professionals. With careful targeting and practice, you will be able to increase your media coverage.

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(This information was prepared by Lynn Leadbeatter from bfunded, based at Keighley Voluntary Services, and is reproduced with permission.) Sample Press Release

Clayton Canterers

PRESS RELEASE

Prince Charles To Open

Clayton's New Polo Pitch

Ref: polo

24th March 2007

His Royal Highness Prince Charles will play the first chukka at Clayton's new polo pitch on Saturday, 1st April 2007.

The new sports facility in Horton Bank Country Park is the home ground of the Clayton Canterers team, which has been searching for a permanent base for more than ten years. It has secured a grant of £500,000 from Sport England and a £200,000 contribution from Bradford Council towards a clubhouse and reseeding of a nearby grassed area to provide parking for four-wheel drives.

'The new pitch marks a big step forward in the club's history,' says chairman Archie Pratt. 'We have more than 200 members but, until now, we have been forced to practise on school rugby pitches during the summer season or travel to Windsor for all-weather training. We are grateful that polo is now being recognised as an important part of the district's sporting life.'

The Astroturf pitch will be fully floodlit, with a 50-seat covered grandstand and adjoining picnic area. Clayton Canterers will be organising a 'stable sale' in May to raise additional funding for a PA system and on-site farrier.

You are invited to send a reporter and/or photographer to the opening of Posh Ponies Polo Pitch at Horton Bank Country Park, Bradford at 2am on April 1st, 2007.

For further information, please contact Archie Pratt on (01234) 567890 or (0845) 118 212.

Note to editors: Clayton Canterers is Yorkshire's only non-fee paying polo team. Its mission is to make equine sports accessible to all and horses are available to members in return for stable work at stud farms throughout West Yorkshire.

Pics available on request